

THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An edible fat-based shell comprising:
a packaging support having a desired shape that defines a volume therein; and
one or more walls of consistent thickness that are formed directly on the packaging support from an amount of an edible shell-forming composition comprising one or more fats, wherein the composition has a plastic viscosity of about 10 to 40 Poise and a yield value of about 50 to 250 dynes/cm² prior to forming the shell on the support.
2. The edible fat-based shell of claim 1 having the walls have the shape of a cup, cone, or other open top receptacle and which further comprises a filling that is at least partially retained within the shell.
3. The edible fat-based shell of claim 2, wherein the filling is a confectionery that completely fills the shell.
4. The edible fat-based shell of claim 2, wherein the filling comprises an ice confection.
5. The edible fat-based shell of claim 4, wherein the ice confection comprises ice cream, sherbet, or water ice and is present in an amount that extends beyond the open top of the receptacle so as to be provided as an exposed mass for easy consumption.
6. The edible fat-based shell of claim 1, wherein the composition further comprises an emulsifier in an amount of no more than 1% by weight of the composition and a sweetener.
7. The edible fat-based shell of claim 6, wherein the emulsifier comprises lecithin, ammonium phosphatide, polyglyceryl polyricinoleate, citric acid ester of mono-glycerides or combinations thereof.

8. The edible fat-based shell of claim 6, wherein the sweetener comprises sugar, dried honey, corn syrup solids, lactose, anhydrous dextrose, malitol, xylitol, lactitol, mannitol, polydextrose, acesulfame K, sucralose, aspartame, or combinations thereof.
9. The edible fat-based shell of claim 6, wherein the edible shell-forming composition includes the fat in an amount of between about 15 and 38% by weight, the emulsifier in an amount of about 0.05 to 0.65% by weight, and the sweetener in an amount of about 25 to 60% by weight.
10. The edible fat-based shell of claim 1, wherein the shell has the shape of a cone.
11. The edible fat-based shell of claim 10, wherein the cone has a crenelated top rim.
12. The edible fat-based shell of claim 1, wherein the shell includes inclusions on an inner surface.
13. The edible fat-based shell of claim 12, wherein the inclusions comprise nuts, cookie crumbs, cereal, fruit pieces, chocolate chips, candy pieces or coconut.
14. The confectionery item of claim 1, wherein the packaging support is a non-absorptive food grade material comprising paper, foil, transparent, translucent or non-transparent plastic, or a laminate thereof.
15. A method for producing an edible fat-based shell, which comprises:
preparing a packaging support in a desired shape that defines a volume therein; and
directly showering or pouring an amount of an edible shell-forming composition on the packaging support, which composition solidifies to form a shell of consistent thickness thereon, with the composition comprising one or more fats and having a plastic viscosity of about 10 to 40 Poise and a yield value of about 50 to 250 dynes/cm² during the showering or pouring.

16. The method according to claim 15, wherein the shell is formed from an amount of shell-forming composition that is equivalent to what is required for formation of the shell.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein the walls have the shape of a cup, cone, or other open top receptacle and which further comprises providing a filling that is at least partially retained within the shell.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the filling is a confectionery that completely fills the shell.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the filling comprises an ice confection.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the ice confection comprises ice cream, sherbet, or water ice and is present in an amount that extends beyond the open top of the receptacle so as to be provided as an exposed mass for easy consumption.

21. The method of claim 15, wherein the composition further comprises an emulsifier in an amount of no more than 1% by weight of the composition and a sweetener.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the emulsifier comprises lecithin, ammonium phosphatide, polyglyceryl polyricinoleate, or citric acid ester of mono-glycerides.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the sweetener comprises sugar, dried honey, corn syrup solids, lactose, anhydrous dextrose, malitol, xylitol, lactitol, mannitol, polydextrose, acesulfame K, sucralose, or aspartame.

24. The method of claim 15, wherein the packaging support and shell are each formed as a cone.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the shell is formed with a crenelated top rim.

26. The method of claim 24, which further comprises providing inclusions on an inner surface of the shell prior to providing the filling therein.

27. The method of claim 15, wherein the packaging sleeve is a non-absorptive food grade material comprising paper, foil, transparent, translucent or non-transparent plastic, or a laminate thereof.

28. The method of claim 15, wherein the composition is showered from a plurality of streams onto the packaging support.

29. An apparatus for producing an edible fat-based shell, comprising:
a packaging support in a desired shape that defines a volume therein;
a nozzle having multiple holes for showering an edible shell-forming composition onto the packaging support wherein the composition solidifies to form a shell, with the composition comprising one or more fats, wherein the composition has a plastic viscosity of about 10 to 40 Poise and a yield value of about 50 to 250 dynes/cm² during showering; and
a positioning device for arranging the nozzle and packaging support in an operative position for properly showering the composition onto the packaging support.

30. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the nozzle is operated to dispense an amount of shell-forming composition that is equivalent to what is required for formation of the shell.

31. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the packaging support has the shape of a cup, cone, or other open top receptacle and the shell conforms to the shape of the support.

32. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the holes are placed in the nozzle to provide streams that are angled at less than 90 degrees against the packaging sleeve.

33. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the holes in the nozzle are angled by about 20 to 35 degrees.